

The life and soul



This time last year, life had been a little unkind to a lot of my loved ones, so despite the joy of the holiday season, everyone was visibly stressed out by the impending pressure of costly gifts and festivities. Yet ironically, that stress was exactly why they so badly needed those little treats. I'd seen a heartwarming illustration on Instagram of a person holding a jar labelled "Happiness," with the one next to him asking, "Where did you find that?" The first one replied, "I created it myself." It made me smile with its innocent and simple truth—that if it's truly happiness that we seek, we can't sit around waiting for the universe to simply deliver that to us. Instead, we must be responsible for actively trying to create it for ourselves. Sure, life will always have its hard parts, and perhaps I'm wrong, but I don't believe that happiness is a constant state that one can achieve for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every week. It comes and goes in pockets, some larger and littler than others, but it's up to us to choose to treasure the good memories to tide us over

until the next wave when the hard times come. As Albus Dumbledore put it in *Harry Potter* (mock me if you will, those books are full of wisdom!), "Happiness can be found in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light." The jar illustration reminded me of an idea I'd heard of

long ago, and I instantly knew what I wanted to do to spread a little holiday cheer. I told my friends that this year, we were all banned from spending loads of money on gifts, and instead, we had to create them. This way, it would lessen the financial pressure and hopefully, the creativity would help uplift spirits and take our minds off our troubles too. I went out and bought a bunch of empty jars, some cute pens, and stacks of post-its, and handed them out. The idea was that every time something good happened—be it a job promotion, completing a triathlon or a cute text from your crush—you'd write it down and pop it into the jar. Throughout the year, every time you felt sad, you'd have to just take one look at the jar and see how full it is (not to mention how much more space you had left to fill it with more happy memories), to be reminded of how #blessed your life is even when times feel rough. At the end of the year, you can tip it out and remember all of the wonderful moments that passed, perhaps some that you'd forgotten. It would be your very own little jar of joy, and a reminder that no matter how many curveballs life might sometimes throw at you, the power to find a light amidst the darkness can literally be in your own hands. It'd also serve as a reminder that in the same way your life can turn upside down in a day, it can also turn the right way up again just as quickly—so even when you feel like you're in despair, keep that chin up because you never know what's around the corner. It's almost time for me to empty my jar, and I can't wait. I'm nervous and excited. It will be a strange rush of emotions to not only be reminded of so much, but also to see what had made me so happy back then and what makes me happy now. Regardless of what I find, there's one thing I know even before I unscrew that lid—it might just be a jar full of post-its to anyone else, but to me, that jar resembles how full my heart should be. Like my own little anti-Pandora's Box. And if that isn't a great way to end the year full of anticipation for an even better one ahead, I don't know what is. Here's to an amazing 2016, and an incredible 2017. Happy Holidays—see you in January!

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TIME FOR A CHANGE

IF YOU HAVE...

15 SECONDS

It doesn't matter if it's the end, start or middle of the year, and if you put it into a jar or not. Pull out a post-it and write down five things you're happy about today; it'll help you gain perspective and smile a little.

5 MINUTES

No time to properly wash your hair? Consider braiding it instead of using dry shampoo daily. It'll take longer, but could save your strands in the long run. "Storm Chaser," p.11

15 MINUTES

Grab a kettlebell and a step of some sort and run through this simple workout that will challenge your balance while working your tush and legs. "Embrace The Imbalance," p. 51

30 MINUTES

Whip up one of these simple but effective home-made face masks by makeup artist Kat Sherman for a proper pamper-yourself night in. "Beauty and a Budget," p.23

60 MINUTES

Got some time to catch up on your favourite TV show? Great. Flip through our guide and work in a workout before, during or after, inspired by your flick of choice. "Netflix... and Workout," p.78

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